Education H.H. **(1948) Department.**

Ms. SERIES

G.O. No.	2257 Education
Dated	10.9.1948

[Despatch Abstract.]

Abstract of proceedings of Commission- 83rd Session- September 1948- Resolution VII- Weeding of Records- Papers

No.F.92_10/47 E.I.
Government of India,
Ministry of Education,
New Delhi 3, the 9th June 1948.

From

The Deputy Secretary to the Government of India.

To

All Provincial Governments and Chief Commissioners.

Sub: Indian Historical Records Commission- 23rd Session, December, 1946- Resolution VII regarding weeding of records.

Sir,

I am directed to forward for information and such action as the Provincial Government may consider necessary copies of Resolution VII passed by the Indian Historical Records Commission at its 23rd Session held at Indore in December, 1946, together with a copy of the amended rules for the weeding of the records of the Government of India.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Sd
For Deputy Secretary.

True Copy.

The Government of India have circulated these rules to all the Departments under them. It is desirable that similar rules should be adopted by all the Provinces and Indian States. If the Commission agrees to make a recommendation to the Provincial and State Governments to this effect an additional rule may be framed as follows and added to those already circulated by the Government of India.

4. The records marked for destruction after weeding by the Departments of origin should be sent to the respective archival heads of the Central Provincial and States Governments as the case may be for final disposal. The archival head should scrutinise such records with a view to ascertaining their present and future historical value and provide for the preservation of such records as are considered sufficiently important. "

Resolution VII: (a) This Commission has carefully examined the rules framed by the Local Records Sub-Committee and approved by the Government of India for weeding their records and are of opinion that the addenda to rules suggested in the Agenda should be embodied in the set of rules and be adopted by the Central Government, His Excellency the Crown Representative (in Centre Residencies), Provincial Governments and Indian States.

Resolution VII. (b) The Commission further recommends that the present time is inopportune for weeding of records in the Government and State Agencies and therefore strongly urges upon the authorities concerned that no weeding on the future constitution of this country.

Rules to guide the weeders in weeding the Records of the Government of India.

The broad principle to be followed in weeding records is that no papers which are important or are likely to become important in future, however indirectly as sources of information on any aspect of history, whether political military, social, economic etc, or which is or may in future prove to be of biographical or antiquarian interest, shall be destroyed. In the two succeeding paragraphs are enumerated, in a general way, the classes of papers to be preserved or destroyed. The enumerated is by no means exhaustive, it is merely indicative.

2. Ordinarily the following classes of documents are to be preserv

(i) Manuscripts of all printed proceedings collections.
(ii) Originals of Despatches from and to the Secretary of State
(iii) Originals of legal documents or documents of legal value.
(iv) Holograph and Autograph letters and Originals of Minutes of Viceroys Members of Council, Commanders-in-chief and other eminent personages or manuscripts of notes by them on important matters.
(v) Originals of notes recorded on important files which have been circulated to Hon'ble Members.
(vi) Discussions relating to important public services.
(vii) Papers relating to appointment of Viceroys, Governors Members Members of Council, Commanders-in-chief and other Head of Administrations.
(viii) Papers continaing discussions of important principles of policies.

Ordinarily the following classes of papers may be destroyed.

(i) Registers, such as Receipts and Issue Registers, Diaries, list of despatches to the Secretary of State, spare copy registers and other registers of emphemeral interest, and not only surplus copies of registers.

(iii) Spare copies of printed papers.
(iv) Printed A, B or Deposit Proceedings Collections in excess of six copies. Two of the six copies retained shall be reserved as "Historical records" the rest being used for reference in connection with departmental business.
(v) Local Governments Proceedings Volumes in excess of one copy.
vi) Departmental Administration reports in excess of two copies.

The records marked for destruction after weeding by the Departments of origin should be sent to the respective archival heads of the Central aProvincial and States Governments as the case may be for final disposal. The archival head should scrutinise such records with a view to ascertaining their present and future historical value and provide for the preservation of such records , as are considered sufficiently important.

From
Rao Bahadur
Dr. B.S. Baliga, Ph.D.(Lond),
Curator, Madras Record Office,
CHITTOOR.

No. 1511-D-VII/48-1, dated 29th June 1948.

Sir,

Sub: Indian Historical Records Commission- 23rd Session, December 1946- Resolution VII regarding weeding of records.

Ref: Government Endorsement No. 44223 C2/48-1, Edn., dated 21st June 1948.

I enclose herewith my remarks on Resolution VII of the Indian Historical Records Commission, December 1946 regarding weeding of records, forwarded with the Government endorsement cited above. The letter from the Government of India with its enclosure is returned herewith as desired in the endorsement.

The books referred to by me in my remarks will be furnished to the Government if required.

Remarks on Resolution VII of the Indian Historical Records Commissio
December 1946.

Resolution VII (a) refers to a set of rules adopted by the Government of India for weeding their current records and a copy of these rules is given in the communicaation of the Government of India. To these rules is added a rule on the recommendation of the Indian Historical Records Commission to the following effect : "The records marked for desctruction after weeding by the Departments or origin should be sent to the respective archival heads of the Central, Provincial and States Governments as the case may be for final disposal. The archival head should scrutinise such records with a view to ascertaining their present and future historical value and provide for the preservation of such records as are considered sufficiently important."

Resolution VII (B) recommends that no weeding of records should done, in thecase presumably of old records as opposed to the current records, until a definite legislation is passed on the future constitution of the country.

To take first, Resolution VII (a) So fara as this Province is concened there is nothing to fear that records of historical value will be weeded from the current records. The weeding of the current records of the Government is done in the Central Records Branch of the Secretariat under carefully devised rules with a view to ensuring that no records of value are distroyed and that all such records menat for permanent retention are sent to the Madras Record Office (Please see pages 159-161 of the Secretariat Manual 1939 Edition). Similar rules are also observed by the Board of Revenue in regard to the weeding of its current records (Please see Board's standing Order No. 169). Records received in this office for permanent retention show that none of the classes of documents enumerated under items I to VIII of paragraph 2 of the Government of India Rules is weeded or destroyed in our Province. In regard to the classes of records which, it has been suggested in the Government of India rules, may be destroyed, the rules already framed in our Province are sufficient safeguards to ensure that records of ephemerieal interest are destroyed by the Departments themselves. The Government of India rules under tiem I in paragraph 3 contemplate the destruction of personal registers. Such registers however are not destroyed in our Province as they hade been found to be a great help in tracing papers which cannot be traced with the help of the Indexes. As to items II, III and VI of the Government of India rules, only a few copies of the Printed Proceedings Volumes the printed copies of G.Os and the Departmental Administration Reports are sent to the Madras Record Office and it is necessary to retain these in the interests of administration. Items IV and V do not call for remarks.

Regarding the addendum to the rules, that the Archivist should scrutinise the records marked out for destruction by the Departments "with a view to ascertaining their present andfuture historical value" and retaining such of them "as are considered sufficiently important", I find it difficult to ensorse this view as it is against the principles of archive administration. That and administrator who creates the records -- and not the archivst or the historian-- is the only proper authority to decide wich of the current records are of value and therefore should be retained permanently and which of the current records are of no va ue and therefore should be destroyed, is one of the widely accepted principlos in archivism. This is what Dr. Fowlder, for sometime the Chairman of the Technical Section of the British Records Association, says in his book on "The Care of County Munimen "The responsibility of deciding what should be kept and what destroyed can only rest in the last instance upon the administrative official, guided solely by the working needs of himself and his successors; it lies neither in the function nor the capacity of

of a still vital record. The selection of offical records for destruction should rightly be made by the head of the department from which they have emanated". And Mr. Hilary Jenkinson, who is now the Deputy Keeper of Records of the Public Record Office, London, in his "Manual of Archive Administration" makes the following observations in regard to the destruction of current records: "In fine, for the Archivist to destroy a document because he thinks it useless is to import into the collection under this charge what we have been throughout most anxious to keep out of it, an element of his personal judgment; for the Historian to destroy becuase he thinks a document useless may be safer at the moment (since he presumably knows more history than the Archivist) but is even more destructive of the Archives' reputation for impartiality in the future; but for an Administrat body to destroy what it no longer needs is a matter entirely within its competance and an action which future ages (even though they may find reason to deplore it) cannot possibly critisise as illegitimate or as affecting the status of the remaining archiv provided always that the Administration proceeds only upon those grounds upon which alone it is competent to make a decision-- the needs of its own pratical business". Nor is this all. If the Curator, who is the Provincial Archivist, is to go through all records which are every year marked out for destruction by all the Departments of the Government and the Board, he will have to be assisted by a competent additiona staff, for the number of records that will have to be scrutinised will be numerous. Since, however, our Government have already framed a careful set of rules to see that no current records of value are destroyed and all records of value are sent to the Madras Record Office for preservation, and since the suggestion made by the Indian Historical Records Commission that the current records weeded out by the Departments should again be scrutinised by the Archivist is against the principlies of Archivism, I do not think that any action is called for on Resolution VII (a).

Now Resolution VII (b) recommends that no records which are now in the several Government 'agencies' should be weeded and destroyed untill legislation is passed on the future constitution of the Country. This resolution, so far as I can see, is grounde on the fear that unless some definite procedure is prescribed for the weeding and destruction of old records, there is the possibility of a Provincial Government or a State destroying their old records of historical interest merely because they are not of any administrative value. So far as our Province is conerned, a certain amount of weeding and destruction of old records is done both in the Madras Record Office and in the Offices of the Heads of Departments like the Collectors. But this weeding and destruction is carried out under the existing orders of the Government on the soundest lines possible, after assessing the administrative as well as the historical value of every record to ensure that no records of any value are destroyed. In the Madras Record Office the weeding is being done in accordance with G.O. No 2289, Education, dated 1st October 1937, to relieve congestion and to reduce repairs with chiffon and other costly materials. As pointed out in paragraphs 5-6 of my letter No. 1190 D-VII/1936-2 dated 15th December 1936 disposed of in that G.O. it does not involve the destruction of any paper in the bundles for which an authenticated copy is not available in the manuscript volumes. What is done is to compare the documents in the bundles with the corresponding authenticated copies of these in the manuscript volumes and to weed out only such of the documents in the bundles (1) as have neither historica nor administrative value and (2) as have full copies available in the manuscript volumes. All documents in the bundles which are not copied in the manuscript volumes are retained, so also all documents which have any historical or administrative interest. This procedure sacrifices no historical interest. I do not see any harm in continuing this mode of weeding which actua involves no destruction of information of any value contained

in the old records. I may also inform the Government in this connection that the regular weeding ataff appointed under the G.O. mentioned above has been abolished recently in consequence of the retrenchment (please see my letter No. 2247-A/47-2 dated 12th December 1947 disposed of in G.O. No. 440, Education, Dated 4th March 1948) and that the weeding work is now being carried on by two of the clerks of the Publication Section.

In the offices of the Heads of Departments and the Collectors the weeding of old records is not regularly done, but whenever it is done, these officers are under the existing orders (Please see G.O. No. 152, Finance, dated 16th February 1922) required to consult the Curator before destroying any documents in order to ensure that no documents of historical value are destroyed. Whenever any weedin is proposed by the Collectors or other heads of Departments, lists of the records which they consider valueless from the administrative point of view are sent to the Curator. The Curator then carefully goes through these lists, marks out all documents which may have some historical value, calls for samples of documents if necessary to judge their value, and it is only then, that the documents which have neither the administrat nor the historical value are ordered to be destroyed. No one has till now complained about this existing procedure; on the other hand it has gone a long way to eliminate worthless documents, to relieve congestion in the record rooms, and to contribute to the proper preservation of all records of value. This procedure is also not opposed to any principles of archivism. Whereas in the case of current records it has been considered that the head of the Department who creates these records and not the archivist is the fittest person to weed them out, in the case of the old records, the archivist, especially if he has a knowledge of history, is considered to be the proper person to be consulted before ordering destruction. It is upon this principle, to safeguard the interest of historical records, that the Government have in G.O. NO. 740, Finance, dated 13th November 1933 ordered that no head of a Department should destroy and records of the pre-Mutiny period before consulting the Curator. This rule has worked well.

In view therefore of thefact that in our Province, special precautions are taken to see that no old records of any historical value are destroyed, it does not seem necessary to take action on Resolution VII (b) of the Indian Historical Records Commission.

Sd.
CURATOR.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.
Abstract.

I.H.R.C- 23rd Session- December 1946- Resolution VII- Weeding of records- Papers recorded.

Education and Public Health Department.

G.O. Ms. No. 2257. Dated 10-9-1948.

Read:

Ref: From the Govt. of India Ministry of Education, No.F.92-10/47-E.1., d/9-6-48.

From the Curator, M.R.O. No.1511-D-VII /48-1, dated 29-6-1948.

ORDER:

Recorded.

(By Order of His Excellency the Governor)

Sd.
Secretary to Government.

To the Curator, Madras Record Office.

True Copy

Office Assistant,
Madras Record Office.

MG.

17/6/49.